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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: BABIL ASSASSINATION: FOCUS TURNS TOWARD SUNNI EXTREMISTS AND  
AWAY FROM ISCI/BADR

REF: HILLAH 0003

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth Hillas, Team Leader, Babil PRT, Dept of  
State. REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) ISF and Dawa sources say initial indications point to Sunni "criminals" as the perpetrators of the 16 January assassination of the number two candidate on Da'wa's PC election list, Haythim Al-Husseiny (reftel). Babil Deputy Da'wa Chairman Dr. Neama Jassim sought to play down initial speculation, including among Da'wa leaders, that ISCI/Badr was behind the assassination. He stressed to the PRT leader that Da'wa was making no accusations against any political party. He voiced confidence in the ISF's handling of the investigation and confirmed that an MOI team from Baghdad would arrive in Babil on 19 January to lead the investigation.

¶2. (C) Within 36 hours of the assassination, the IP and IA had detained at least 35 persons, including three Iraqi policemen, according to Dr. Jassim. A fourth policeman is still being sought. (IA Brigade Commander MG Abdul Ameer indicated that 54 persons were detained.) According to various sources, MG Ameer was either leading or the co-lead with PDoP BG Fadhil Raddad in the provincial investigation. Jassim credited Ameer with quickly tamping down anger among Shia in the Jabella area eager to exact revenge on Sunnis. Da'wa released a statement 17 January condemning the killing while urging restraint. The curfew was lifted on 18 January, and Jabella remains calm but tense, according to Dr. Jassim.

¶3. (C) The investigation has so far revealed that a house next to the assassination site was also used by gunmen, in addition to the five gunmen in a vehicle. Empty bullet casings were found at the house. Jassim suggested that a Sunni "sleeper cell" may have been involved, but he acknowledged that this was still just a theory. MG Ameer identified two brothers, both in ISF custody, as suspects in the assassination: Haithem Taleb Khalaty and Khatan Taleb Khalaty. The suspected ringleader, Hadi Ali Hussein Al-Dulaimi (aka Abu Wadha), was still at large as of late 18 January.

¶4. (C) On 17 January, nearly all the Da'wa PC candidates held a planned meeting with PM Nuri Al-Maliki in Baghdad. What was supposed to have been a campaign pep talk and photo op turned naturally to a discussion of Al-Husseiny's assassination. According to those present, the PM urged patience in allowing the investigation to produce results and expressed confidence that Da'wa would emerge strengthened in Babil.

¶5. (C) Comment: The focus of ISF and Da'wa suspicion shifted quite notably from the first day after the assassination to the second. That may reflect leads being pursued in investigation, although both our ISF and Da'wa contacts have made clear that no hard evidence has been obtained and no confessions made. There may also be political reasons for Da'wa, as well as the ISF, to play down suspicions about ISCI/Badr. This was clearly Dr. Jassim's intent in stressing that no political party was suspected of involvement.

HEATH